

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BRUSSE 12689 271230Z

ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T BRUSSELS 12689

EXDIS

E. O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MARR, PFOR, NATO, BE, US
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE EUCOM MOVE TO BELGIUM

1. DAVIGNON CALLED ME IN TO TALK ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF
EUCOM MOVING TO BELGIUM. HE SAID THAT BELGIUM AND THE
UNITED STATES SHOULD EXAMINE THE MATTER CAREFULLY AND DECIDE
WHETHER THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES WERE GREAT ENOUGH TO JUSTIFY
TAKING THE POLITICAL RISKS.

2. TO ILLUSTRATE THE PROBLEM AS HE
SEES IT, DAVIGNON RETRACED A BIT OF HISTORY. WHEN NATO AND
SHAPE WERE KICKED OUT OF FRANCE AND THE QUESTION OF PROVIDING
THEM A NEW HOME WAS BEING DEBATED IN BELGIUM, MANY VOICES
WERE RAISED AGAINST HAVING NATO AND SHAPE HEADQUARTERS
LOCATED HERE. SOME FEARED THAT THEIR PRESENCE WOULD ATTRACT
SOVIET MISSILES IN THE EVENT OF WAR. ALTHOUGH THE DEBATE
WAS QUITE HOT, THE BELGIAN PARLIAMENT EVENTUALLY AGREED
TO PERMIT NATO AND SHAPE TO SET UP HEADQUARTERS IN
BELGIUM. TO GET PARLIAMENT'S AGREEMENT, THE BELGIAN
GOVERNMENT PROMISED THAT NO OTHER FOREIGN MILITARY BASES
WOULD BE PERMITTED ON BELGIAN SOIL.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BRUSSE 12689 271230Z

3. OPPOSITION TO NATO AND SHAPE HERE HAS GRADUALLY
SUBSIDED, DAVIGNON SAID. TODAY THE ISSUE IS QUIESCENT.
HOWEVER, THE ORIGINAL BELGIAN CONCERNS ARE STILL PRESENT
NOT FAR BENEATH THE SURFACE. DAVIGNON THINKS THAT IT
WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNWISE TO RISK A NEW DEBATE IN

PARLIAMENT UNLESS THE STRATEGIC BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM MOVING EUCOM HERE WOULD BE LARGE.

4. DAVIGNON IS CONCERNED THAT OPPOSITION TO A PROPOSED EUCOM MOVE TO BELGIUM WOULD BE SO GREAT THAT THE GOVERNMENT COULD EITHER NOT PUSH IT THROUGH PARLIAMENT AT ALL OR ONLY DO SO AT HIGH POLITICAL COST. IT WOULD BE ESPECIALLY DANGEROUS TO PUT THIS QUESTION BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT WHEN THE GOVERNMENT IS FRAGILE AS AT PRESENT AND THE SOCIALISTS ARE IN THE OPPOSITION. IN EITHER EVENT, DAVIGNON FEARS THAT BELGIAN ANTAGONISM TO EUCOM COMING TO BELGIUM WOULD BE SEEN IN THE U.S. AS BELGIAN OPPOSITION TO NATO AND THE COMMON DEFENSE EFFORT. THIS COULD DAMAGE NATO AND THE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO EUROPE, TO THE DETRIMENT OF BOTH BELGIUM AND THE U.S.

5. IN DAVIGNON'S OPINION, THERE IS NO WAY THAT THE EUCOM MOVE COULD BE ARRANGED WITHOUT A NEW LEGAL INSTRUMENT THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT FOR APPROVAL. DAVIGNON CONSIDERS THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF MOVING EUCOM TO BELGIUM IS A NEW POLITICAL QUESTION. IT COULD NOT BE HANDLED AS A LOGICAL CONSEQUENCE OF THE SHAPE HEADQUARTERS BEING HERE. NOR COULD IT BE DEALT WITH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LOC AGREEMENTS.

6. I TOLD DAVIGNON THAT GENERAL HAIG HAD ALREADY REQUESTED THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE TO ASK THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE TO APPROACH THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT ABOUT A JOINT STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF MOVING EUCOM TO

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 BRUSSE 12689 271230Z

BELGIUM. I ASKED DAVIGNON WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT SUCH A JOINT STUDY. DAVIGNON SAID THAT HE WAS HESITANT RATHER THAN COMPLETELY NEGATIVE. THE BELGIANS ARE PREPARED TO LOOK AT THE PROBLEM WITH US, HE SAID. BUT THE JOINT EXAMINATION SHOULD DEAL WITH POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC QUESTIONS AND NOT ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL QUESTIONS.

7. DAVIGNON NOTED THAT THE PRESENT ARRANGEMENT, WITH SHAPE IN BELGIUM AND EUCOM IN GERMANY, HAD WORKED SATISFACTORILY FOR MANY YEARS. COLOCATION WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE MORE EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATIVELY. BUT THE KEY QUESTION, IN DAVIGNON'S MIND, IS WHETHER THERE ARE IMPORTANT STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS THAT WOULD WARRANT THE KNOWN POLITICAL RISKS. THIS IS THE QUESTION THAT DAVIGNON THINKS THE U.S. AND BELGIAN SHOULD EXAMINE TOGETHER. IF THE TWO GOVERNMENTS DECIDE THAT THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGES ARE GREATER THAN THE POLITICAL DISADVANTAGES, THE LEGAL AND TECHNICAL

PROBLEMS COULD BE SOLVED.

8. PROCEDURALLY, DAVIGNON SAID THAT FURTHER DISCUSSION
OF THE EUCOM MOVE SHOULD BE THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS.
HE SAID THAT THE BELGIAN MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE
BELGIAN MILITARY COMMANDS WOULD BE TOLD TO REFER ANY
QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY.

9. PLEASE ADVISE.RENNER

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